

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EUR-12 SAB-01 /082 W
----- 129030

R 091331Z APR 76

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7872

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, IS, JO

SUBJ: WEST BANK ELECTION DAY -- MINUS 3 AND COUNTING

REF: JERUSALEM 494, 476 AND 469

1. SUMMARY. RAMALLAH AND NABLUS "NATIONALISTS" OPENLY SUPPORT PLO. SOME INDEPENDENTS GIVEN CHANCE IN RAMALLAH, BUT IN NABLUS NATIONALIST SLATE APPEARS DOMINANT. TEN ADMINISTRATIVE DETAINEES, ONE STILL IN PRISON, RUNNING. SEVERAL "NATIONALIST" SLATES CO-ORDINATE CAMPAIGNING. VOTING STATISTICS RELEASED. SPECULATION ON CHANGE IN NABLUS AND RAMALLAH. END SUMMARY.

2. RAMALLAH'S MAYOR KARIM KHALAF IS SUPPORTING THE PLO OPENLY IN HIS CAMPAIGNING, ACCORDING TO LOCAL RESIDENT. KHALAF ALSO OPENLY OPPOSES ISRAELI DEFMIN PERES PLAN FOR LOCAL AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION. EARLIER THIS WEEK, "NATIONALIST" ELECTIONS POSTERS (SEE JERUSALEM 476) WERE CONFISCATED BY ISRAELI AUTHORITIES WHO HAVE SAID CAMPAIGNING

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MUST BE LIMITED TO LOCAL ISSUES. OBSERVERS SAY KHALAF'S POSITIONS

ARE RECEIVING ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE FROM THE VOTERS.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, AN ELOQUENT, INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE, ABDNUR JANHUR IS REPORTEDLY RUNNING A WELL-FINANCED AND POPULAR CAMPAIGN. AS MANY AS 1,200 PEOPLE ARE SAID TO HAVE ATTENDED ON OF HIS MEETINGS. JANHUR, WHO REPORTEDLY WORKS WELL WITH THE OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES, HAS DONE MANY FAVORS IN OBTAINING PEOPLES' RELEASE FROM JAIL AND TRAVEL PERMITS. ALSO, DURING THE RECENT CURFEW, JANHUR REPORTEDLY WAS ALLOWED TO MOVE ABOUT AND PROVIDED MANY WITH SERVICES. OTHER POPULAR INDEPENDENTS ARE PHARMASIST JAD MIKHAIL AND RUNNING MATE MOHAMAD AMIN, BOTH BA'ATHIST.

4. THE "NATIONALIST" SLATE CONTINUES TO LEAD THE FIELD IN NABLUS, ACCORDING TO MOST WEST BANK OBSERVERS. THE JERUSALEM POST REPORTED APRIL 9 THAT ONE MEMBER OF THE SLATE, DR. HATEM ABU GHAZALEH, HAS STATED OPENLY THAT HE IS A PRO-PLO CANDIDATE. GHAZALEH, WHO REPORTEDLY SPENT TWO YEARS IN PRISON, SAID HE INTENDED TO "KEEP DENOUNCING THE OCCUPATION AND HANDING OUT PAMPHLETS" TO THIS EFFECT.

5. IN BEIT SAHUR, AN ADMINISTRATIVE DETAINEE, ATTALLAH JAMIL RISHMAWI, STILL IMPRISONED, IS HEADING AN 8-MAN "YOUNG MEN'S" SLATE. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE NINE FORMER ADMINISTRATIVE DETAINEES AND ONE COVICTED "TERRORIST" AMONG THE CANDIDATES, ACCORDING TO ISRAELI AUTHORITIES. UNCLEAR WHY THE LATTER IS ALLOWED TO RUN. ALTHOUGH JORDANIAN LAW ONLY EXCLUDES POTENTILA CANDIDATES WHO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES OF MORAL TURPITUDE, IT WAS THOUGHT ISRAELIS WOULD ALSO EXCLUDE "TERRORISTS."

6. IN EL-BIRA, WHERE THE INCUMBENT MAYOR IS NOT RUNNING, A "NATIONALIST" AND A "PROGRESSIVE" SLATE ARE CONTESTING THE ELECTION. BOTH SLATES ARE YOUNG, BUT THE "PROGRESSIVES" ARE REPORTED TO BE MORE LEFTIST AND NATIONALISTIC THAN THE OTHER.

7. THE "NATIONALIST" SLATE IN HEBRON, NABLUS, RAMALLAH AND TULKARM RAN WHAT APPEARS TO BE JOINT AD IN THE ARABIC DAILY AL FAJR APRIL 9. RAMALLAH AND TULKARM HAD DONE SO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PREVIOUSLY. NOT INCLUDED WERE THE NATIONALIST SLATES IN JERICHO, EL BIRA AND BETHLEHEM.

8. ISRAELI AUTHORITIES SAY THEY WILL LEAVE THE RUNNING OF THE ACTUAL VOTING ON APRIL 12 TO LOCAL ELECTION COMMITTEES. SECURITY FORCES WILL BE AVAILABLE, HOWEVER, SHOULD DISORDERS OCCUR.

9. THE MILGOV HAS RELEASED THE FOLLOWING VOTER STATISTICS FOR THE FOUR MAJOR CITIES: NALBUS--70,000 RESIDENTS, 19,500 ELIGIBLE VOTERS, 6,000 WOMEN VOTERS; HEBRON--50,000 RESIDENTS, 11,000 ELIGIBLE VOTERS, 2,300 WOMEN VOTERS; BETHLEHEM--20,000 RESIDENTS, 6,000 ELIGIBLE VOTERS, 2,700 WOMEN VOTERS, AND RAMALLAH 17,000 RESIDENTS, 4,400 VOTERS, 1,900 ARE WOMEN VOTERS.

10. COMMENT: NATIONALIST/ SLATES IN NABLUS AND RAMALLAH HAVE TAKEN SIMILAR POSITIONS VIS-A-VIS PLO AND OCCUPATION, BUT DO NOT HAVE ALTOGETHER SIMILAR BACKGRUOUNDS AND PROSPECTS. S PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REF JERUSALEM 476), THE NABLUS GROUP GENERALLY COMBINES STRONG NATIONSLIST CREDTIALS WITH ESTABLISHMENT FAMILY BACKGROUNDS.

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE A FEW WEAK SPOTS AND FEW STRONG INDEPENDENTS, IT APPEARS THA THE AMJORITY ON THIS SLATE HAVE A GOOD CHANCE TO WIN AND BISSAM SHEKA' FAVORED FOR MAYOR.

THIS WOULD NOT BE A PARTICULARLY NEW DEPARTURE FOR NABLUS. INCUMBENT HAJ MA'ZUZ AL MASRI HAS CLASHED A NUMBER OF TIMES WITH THE OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES AND, IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, THE REST OF THE CITY COUNCIL RESIGNED AND WERE THE FIRST TO DO SO DURING THE RECENT DISORDERS. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NEW AND OLD CITY COUNCIL, SHOULD THE "NATIONALISTS" BE ELECTED, MIGHT BE LARGELY IN STYLE, WITH THE NEW COUNCIL OPTING MORE READILY FOR CONFRONTATION AND IN ITS LINKS WITH THE WORKING CLASS SINCE SEVERAL NATIONALSIST CANDIDATES ARE EITHER SELF-PROCLAIMED COMMUNISTS, LABOR LEADERS OR KNOWN FOR THEIR POPULARITY WITH WORKERS. MOREOVER, SLATE CONSISTS OF YOUNGER AND LESS EXPERIENCED CANDIDATES.

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11. IN RAMALLAH, KHALAF, ALTHOUGH THOUGHT TO BE FRONT-RUNNER, MAY FIND SEVERAL OF HIS RUNNING MATES DEFEATED. AS A LOT, THEY ARE NOT WELL KNOWN, NOR HAVE AS STRONG CLAN BACKING, AS THE NABLUS GROUP. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL OF THE INDEPDENTS ARE QUITE POPULAR. THERE IS RENEWED SPECULATION THAT KHALAF MIGHT BE DEPORTED SHOULD HE WIN RE-ELECTION AND PUSH THEOCCUPATING AUTHORITIES TOO FAR, ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST HE HAS SHOWN GREAT APPARENTL SKILL IN SKATING ON THIN ICE.

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